

SUPPLEMENT TO MAY 25, 1929, ELECTRICAL WORLD

~ Hail to the Immortal!

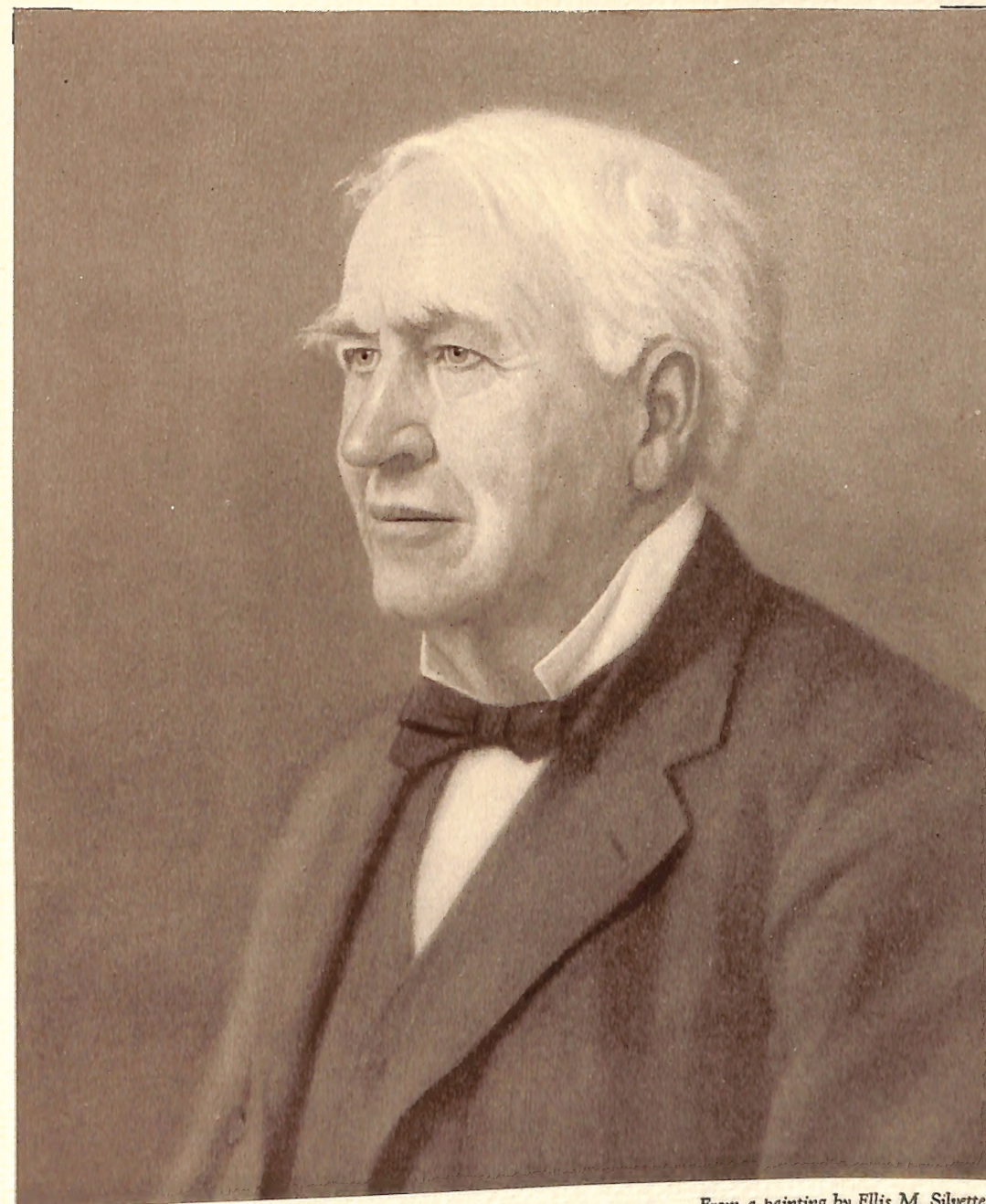
As, WITH THE SEMI-CENTENNIAL of the incandescent electric light, Thomas A. Edison, full of years and honors, reaches the apex of his fame, the industry he founded once again salutes him. In him America sees her most famous citizen, civilization its foremost inventor, humanity its greatest benefactor on the material side. The trainboy, the telegraph operator, the indefatigable experimenter, the veteran of the laboratory, became long ago the peer of all the most illustrious among the moderns. To a world rebellious against the dark, where tallow had been supplanted by kerosene and kerosene by gas, he brought, almost as if by creative edict, the light that all mankind use today—dividing what physicists called indivisible, achieving what scientists termed beyond achievement. From his lamp sprang the Pearl Street station, and in the Pearl Street station lay the seed of today's titanic machines and far-flung wires.

ONLY FIFTY YEARS AGO—and yet the face of the earth is changed! The unassuming, candid, friendly man, with his capacity for unceasing industry, his power to inspire loyalty, his constitutional skepticism entwined with abiding faith, has wrought a miracle which still persists and grows. Of all the inventions of the last hundred years, his have proved the most fundamental and the most prolific.

EDISON'S TRIUMPH is almost free from derogation and attack. His career is surely among the happiest. It has not been his fate to look back, with contemporary statesmen, on high aims imperfectly achieved, on ambitions largely frustrate, on popularity turned fickle, and to weigh adulation against hatred, success against defeat, reward against neglect, and ask if fame be worth the price. Nor was it his to captain great armies of destruction, "with their guns and drums," and then, the cup of victory drained or snatched away, to taste in the throat the acrid tang war leaves behind. Nor yet, with master poets, painters and musicians, has he had to reflect on the circumscription of artistic eminence and realize to how few the perfect verse, the matchless curve, the ultimate harmony mean aught of enduring or even evanescent delight. Nor, again, has it been his lot to build directly a vast business to respond to his every touch, or to heap together a limitless fortune, and in doing either to incur the onslaughts of envy and calumny or perhaps the accusations of his own conscience at the thought of unfair advantage taken or weaker rivals trampled under foot.

COLUMBUS EXPIRED IN NEGLECT at fifty-five, unaware that he had found a continent on which the world's last and best hope would be staked. Shakespeare died at fifty-two, little dreaming that his fame would burn with increasing luster as century succeeded century. Lincoln fell at fifty-six, a weary politician, who would have smiled in incredulous scorn had he been told that in sixty years his colossal effigy on the banks of the Potomac would draw his fellow-countrymen as to a shrine. But Edison, descendant of centenarians, lives at eighty-two in the plenitude of acknowledged accomplishment, thousands of mighty turbines hymning his praise, the spillways on innumerable streams and the white ways in uncounted cities proclaiming it, with many millions of human beings consciously grateful to him for toil made lighter, comfort increased and pleasure enhanced.

... F.C. WELLS ...



From a painting by Ellis M. Silvette